

# PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES

## Master of Science in Health Science, Physician Assistant Studies - Philadelphia and Georgia Campuses

PCOM's Physician Assistant Studies (PA) program is designed to prepare the student for comprehensive practice in a variety of clinical settings following completion of the second year of the program. The goals and objectives of the program are guided by the criteria set forth by the Standards and Guidelines for an Accredited Education Program for the Physician Assistant. The program has received full accreditation from the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA), and graduates are eligible to sit for the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) examination for national certification and regional, local and national licensure.

## CASPA

PCOM participates in the Centralized Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA). You may obtain additional information about CASPA and apply online at [caspa.liaisoncas.com](https://caspa.liaisoncas.com) (<https://caspa.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>). CASPA applications become available for 2023-2024 enrollments in April 2023. All applications must be e-submitted, completed, and verified by CASPA no later than December 1, 2023, for both PCOM and PCOM Georgia (separate application per campus). When applying to PCOM through CASPA, you will be required to complete PCOM specific questions before submitting.

All required application materials, including the \$75 PCOM institutional application fee (one fee per campus) must be received by the Office of Admissions **no later than** December 15, 2023, for PCOM and PCOM Georgia in order to be considered for admission for the Summer 2024 term. Note that the fee can only be paid online through the PCOM application portal. The link to the portal is sent via email at receipt of a verified and completed CASPA application.

The Faculty Committee on Admissions recommends you submit a completed and verified CASPA application, which includes a PCOM specific question series, as soon as possible as PCOM operates using a rolling admissions process.

## Assessing Applicants for Interview Consideration

Completed and verified CASPA applications and supporting documents will be reviewed and individuals will be selected for a virtual interview by the Faculty Committee on Admissions. Interviews will be offered to those who qualify compared against the applicant pool and successful completion of the following factors, which represent the minimum criteria for consideration for admission. Selection for the PA program is very competitive. Successful applicants will generally exceed the minimum criteria.

- Baccalaureate degree
- Letters of recommendation
- Standardized test score, if necessary (TOEFL)
- Prerequisite coursework
- Grade Point Averages (GPAs)
- Healthcare experience
- Other considerations

An interview is required for admission to the program. They are typically conducted from September through February; although interviews may be conducted before or after this timeframe. A candidate can be selected for an interview at any time throughout the review process as deemed competitive by the Faculty Committee on Admissions.

## Baccalaureate Degree

All applicants must complete a baccalaureate degree, preferably in science or a health-related field, from a regionally accredited college or university in the United States, Canada or the United Kingdom prior to matriculation. Applicants must send official transcripts from all colleges and/or universities attended directly to CASPA. Once enrolled at PCOM, candidates must submit official copies of all college transcripts directly to the PCOM Office of Admissions.

## Letters of Recommendation

Applicants must also submit three letters of recommendation directly to CASPA. Others may be sent in .pdf format to PCOM's Office of Admissions at [recommend@pcom.edu](mailto:recommend@pcom.edu). One recommendation **must** be from a physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner in order to be considered for admission.

## Prerequisite Coursework

4 Credits each, minimum  
Biology I and Biology II

3 Credits minimum of Other Biology Coursework  
(Examples: Microbiology, Genetics, Cell Biology, etc.)

8 Credits minimum of Anatomy and Physiology (can be taken as separate courses or combined as Anatomy and Physiology I & II)

4 Credits each, minimum  
General Chemistry I and General Chemistry II

3 Credits minimum of Other Chemistry Coursework  
(Examples: Organic Chemistry, Biochemistry, etc.)

3 Credits minimum of Health-Related Science Course or Physics  
(Examples: Physics, Nutrition, Immunology, Virology, Microbiology, Genetics, Cell Biology, etc.)

9 Credits minimum of Social Sciences Coursework  
(Examples: Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, History, etc.)

6 Credits minimum of Math Coursework  
(Statistics is considered an acceptable Math course)

- All prerequisite coursework listed above must be completed prior to enrollment with a grade of at least a "C" or 2.0 on a 4.0 scale.
- All science and math prerequisites must be completed within 10 years prior to June enrollment. (e.g., June 2014 or later)
- Applicants must obtain an undergraduate science and cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale (as calculated by CASPA).
- One course cannot be used to satisfy multiple prerequisite courses.
- AP coursework will be accepted provided the course and credits appear on your college transcript.
- All courses must be completed at a regionally accredited institution. Foreign coursework will not count toward meeting any of the prerequisites.
- The program will accept credits completed at a community college.

- The program will accept courses completed online or on campus.
- The program will not accept prerequisite coursework completed as an audit or graded pass/fail with the exception of coursework completed during the spring and summer 2020 terms which may be listed as Pass in a pass/fail grading scale.
- The program will not accept credits completed as CLEP courses.
- At the time of application, candidates must have the prerequisite coursework completed or be able to provide a plan in writing that demonstrates the completion of the prerequisites prior to enrollment in the program (this can be achieved by completing the “Planned or In Progress Coursework” section of CASPA). Two science/math prerequisite courses may be “Planned or In Progress” at the time of application.

## Healthcare Experience

To be considered for an interview for the Physician Assistant Studies program, applicants must have a minimum of 200 hours of direct patient contact experience in volunteerism or employment in the healthcare industry, as documented through CASPA at the time of application. Candidates complete the requirement in a variety of ways, some of which include: working as a certified nursing assistant, pharmacy technician, phlebotomist, LPN, EMT, paramedic, scribe, medical translator, physical therapy aide, patient navigator, mental health aide, etc. Many Physician Assistant Studies program candidates have experienced medicine overseas as volunteers in clinics.

Any volunteer work or paid work in a clinical setting wherein candidates are either providing hands-on care or witnessing care first hand can be acceptable, depending on the nature of the role. In-person health care shadowing experiences are counted and highly recommended. Veterinary medicine hours will not be accepted towards the requirement.

## Other Considerations

Applicants with graduate degrees and/or five years of healthcare experience and/or other unique circumstances or qualifications may be considered, on an individual basis, for waiver of selected published prerequisite coursework. However, all candidates must have earned a baccalaureate degree prior to enrollment, excluding dual-degree candidates. Waiving of any criteria can only be assessed during the formal application review by the Faculty Committee on Admissions. Staff members of the Office of Admissions may not waive application requirements.

Applications are not accepted from individuals ineligible to be licensed as a physician assistant under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of Georgia.

To ensure that students accepted to PCOM will be permitted to perform clerkships during their second year of study, and thus ensure them the opportunity to successfully complete their MS degree requirements, as well as to ensure the safety of the PCOM community, PCOM requires all first year PA students to complete a criminal background check prior to matriculation. All students must have their criminal background checks processed through a PCOM chosen vendor. The Admissions Office will send notification of the process after confirmation of enrollment and must have this information on file prior to orientation. Students will not be permitted to start classes without a criminal background check received and approved by the Office of Admissions.

## Application Decisions

Candidates interviewed are evaluated based on multiple factors including:

- Academic ability
- Scholarly accomplishments
- Problem solving ability
- Decision making skills
- Maturity
- Potential for professional comportment
- Level of commitment to profession
- Personal preparedness
- Congruence with program philosophy and mission

The Admissions Committee reserves the right to accept or reject applications to the chosen program based on merit.

## Notification of Acceptance or Alternate Status

Following completion of the admissions process, applicants will be notified of the Admissions Committee’s decision in writing using the PCOM Admissions portal, including any conditions that must be satisfied prior to or following enrollment. Once admitted, candidates who wish to enroll are asked to review and acknowledge PCOM’s Technical Standards for Admission and Matriculation and submit a \$500 non-refundable tuition prepayment online. The acceptance packet will contain all materials required for enrollment.

Applicants may be placed on the wait list after completion of the interview process. The wait list is not ranked or ordered. Typically, candidates are selected as seats become available from February until classes begin in June. After all expected candidates arrive for orientation in June, those not selected will be sent a final decision letter on their PCOM Admissions portal.

## Policy on Advanced Standing, Transfer of Credits and Experiential Learning and Graduates of Medical Schools

The Physician Assistant Studies program does not offer advanced placement based upon transfer of credits for academic work completed at other institutions of higher learning or upon credit from experiential learning. Applications are not accepted from graduates of medical schools.